



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region 3 Citizens' Advisory Committee Gardiner, MT August 9, 2007

CAC Attendees: Tom Barnes, Sam Samson, Joe Cohenour, Al Harmata, Ed Peretti, LeRoy Mehring, Rick Arnold, Cyndy Andrus, Amy McNamara, Bob Gibson

Absent: Sandy Sallee, Marina Smith, Meg Smith, Ted Coffman, Craig Sharpe, Michael Leach

FWP Staff: Pat Flowers, Mel Frost, Kurt Alt, Joan Buhl, Paul Sihler, Hugh Zackheim, Sara Williamson

Guests: Michael Gilles, Brad Smith

Pat: FWP is presently advertising for CAC members to replace those committee members whose terms expire December 31, 2007. Application deadline is January 4, 2008.

Introductions and issues:

Mike Gilles, disabled hunter. Joe Bowers and Galena Gulch roads are closed during hunting season. Would like roads accessible for handicap hunters during hunting season (these are forest service roads – process will be started this spring with Forest Service). People certified to hunt from a vehicle should be allowed to hunt antlerless elk—the same as the youth.

Pat Flowers: Big game season setting process will start in December for next two years – visit with Kurt.

Cyndy Andrus: Comment in regard to fishing – have a joint permit for fishing between Montana, Idaho and Wyoming.

LeRoy Mehring: Fort Peck funding group

Ed Peretti: Hunter safety (program administration, accessibility, recruitment, scheduling, lack of opportunity, conflict with other activities and programs, online program?)

Joe Cohenour: Hunting in Big Sky area, HD 310, one and only choice for hunting. Fewer hunters the last few years. Don't see the necessity of making it an only choice.

Spanish Peaks sheep herd.

Consistency of camping permits (14 or 16 days) on national forest lands – not consistent forest to forest - Forest issue.

Interim Watering Committee – statewide umbrella of water laws - on state web site.

Sam Samson: Dewatering of Boulder River

Setbacks and subdivisions.

Tom Barnes: There is a Montana ballot initiative “No Trapping Allowed,” to ban trapping and snaring on public land (refer to handout). MT Trappers Assoc. is fighting this initiative. Could expand to fishing/hunting.

Board of Directors of Montana Trapping Association stands opposed to the trapping of wolves—do not want to get involved until everything is in place. At this point, MTA is not ready to support wolf trapping.

Overview of Conservation Easements - Paul Sihler

-Voluntary agreement between a landowners and qualified entity (government or non profit organizations).

-Property rights (things you can do and restrictive rights). Easement is the restrictive right—usually restricting subdivisions. Perpetual and term easements—perpetual easements in Montana – land stays in landowner’s name.

-Why do easements? Don’t want land developed; estate planning/taxes; not all easements are sold, some are donated. Extract value of land without selling it – one time deal. When you sell a conservation easement you pay taxes.

-When an easement is acquired through FWP, FWP is responsible for monitoring to make sure terms are met and to defend terms of easement in court.

-FWP’s interest is in habitat—acquisition of wildlife management areas (Habitat Montana funded through license dollars).

- Sun Ranch didn’t want to commit to permanent public access. FWP is out of negotiations with Sun Ranch.
- Blackfoot Challenge Project – Plum Creek lands, 85% of land will end up in public ownership
- Process for Habitat Montana (funding/projects)—proposal has to fit into one of these categories: intermountain foothills, sagebrush/native rangelands, riparian areas. Looking for projects tied to larger landscapes.
Internal process review (spring and fall submission) done by chief of wildlife division, habitat bureau chief and seven wildlife managers. Each project is evaluated individually based on comprehensive wildlife plan, based on tiers of species and focus areas. Ranking basis uses scoring in different categories/criteria (regionally, statewide).

Elk Summit and Season Setting – Kurt Alt

Elk Summit will be held in Bozeman on Saturday, December 7 at MSU. FWP will discuss the issues and challenges associated with managing elk in Montana along with individuals and groups committed to working together to define the future of elk management in Montana.

Season setting process – Season recommendations are made by FWP to the Commission. Commission will adopt tentative regulations at their December 20 meeting. Public can make recommendations to the Commission at this time. Ten public meetings will be held in Region Three in January to gather public input on proposed season recommendations.

HD 310 elk: Implement unlimited permit only for brow-tined bull – would be the only place you would be able to hunt. Try to increase pressure on the Madison face by reducing pressure in HD 310. Late hunt closed four years ago – recruitment rate low (calves per 100 cows). 450 countable elk in population.

Bighorn Sheep

- Spanish Peaks. Different sheep season proposed – unlimited and limited. Sheep season would cater to opportunity.
- Sheep hunting in Greenhorns not for at least two more years.
- Sheep plan is being developed for the state. How department moves sheep around will be addressed in the plan.

A9/B12 licenses

Going to add second elk license in Paradise Valley, Shields Valley, and in the Gravellys. Most will be issued through the drawing.

Wolf

Season setting proposal on hunting and trapping to be set at Dec. 20 Commission meeting. Breaks the state into three wolf hunting districts (each district with a quota – 80% of quota within district for hunting and 20% for trapping).

Access Discussion

At the August meeting a motion was passed to look at access issues. Members were asked to go back to their communities and identify issues and bring to December meeting.

Bob Gibson: Access is tied to commercial use. Far too much commercial use on the Beaverhead, Big Hole, upper Madison, lower Madison from Blackford to Greycliff, Big Horn, Jefferson, and the upper and lower Gallatin Rivers. Outfitter and guide use has to be capped. FWP should reacquire the issuing and administration of all commercial use. Over-improvement at existing access sites encourages additional commercial use.

Amy McNamara: Additional incentives for private landowners.

Cyndy Andrus: Spoke with Gallatin Co. Commissioners about access issues, specifically Hyalite. Travel plan says the road is suppose to be plowed, but isn't. Access brings a lot of groups together, brings entities together.

LeRoy Mehring: refer to letter from Tony Schoonen

Al Harmata: Ditto to Bob's comments. "Build it and they will come." Commercialization relates to privilege.

Ed Peretti: Public road access needs to be identified on maps—disperses public, provides more public access. New map on Gallatin Forest is worthless-no landmarks.

Joe Cohenour: Incentives for private landowners. Lots of block management in Helena Valley.

Fort Peck Funding Group – LeRoy Mehring: Fort Peck hatchery cost \$25,000,000. Funds generated from warm water fish stamp. Walleye are raised 3 to 4 months out of the year and nothing the other 8 months. Alternatives for funding include raising warm water fish stamp from \$5 to \$8; drop stamp and replace with general fish license money—would open hatchery to rearing other fish species (cut down on transportation costs). Walleye people don't want anything but walleye raised there. Cost efficient to raise all species. Legislature will decide where this goes.

LeRoy recommended raising stamp fee to \$8.00. Joe moved to endorse raising warm water stamp from \$5 to \$8. Seconded by Bob. Motion carried. Cyndy abstained. Rick opposed (doesn't want trout raised there and then transported—disease issue).

Sam Samson: FWP access position was never refilled. Reasonable position to help county commissioners.

Block management – put as much as FWP can into it.

River tolerance – criteria tolerance. Individual preference on tolerability. Set tolerance on what's quality—stay away from going to permits—stay away from lottery.

Encourage the county commissioners to define and identify all roads in county. Go to MACO and in a gentle, forceful way get them to do it.

Tom Barnes: Committee has summed up issues. Need compromise between private landowners and hunters.

Rick Arnold: Comments from fishing community. Goal is to make fishing experience better. Primary concerns with access and public use on the Madison, Yellowstone, Big Hole, Ruby and Beaverhead Rivers—includes river crowding, excessive guide use, social conflict and river etiquette, and aquatic nuisance species.

Floater/wader conflicts on upper Madison.

More access points – a lot of sites are pretty primitive. Sites are getting more torn up, continual impact on the land.

Most people have no clue as to what river etiquette is about.

River bottom concerns – anchors, cleats tearing up bottom.

Restroom facilities – people going onto private land

More access points need to spread people out.

Aquatic nuisance species can wipe out river habitat, i.e. New England mud snails, whirling disease.

Pat Flowers: we're missing LeRoy's list – will not be able to reach consensus tonight.

Tony's letter will be sent out to CAC members.

At next meeting, agree on consensus, policy issues, work with legislators, work on strategies.

Establish sub groups and tackle a couple of issues.

Mobilize with other six CACs?

To get started, Rick and Bob will identify and summarize issues in regard to fishing that have been talked about tonight and get it out to members to review.

Next meeting will be devoted to access issues. Al will work with Bob & Rick on summarizing issues.

Pat Flowers: Common hunting issue – develop public roads guide

Public Comment: None

Next meeting March 19, Bozeman FWP office. Meeting to start at 11:30. Lunch and dinner will be provided. New members will be on by end of January. Past minutes of meetings will be sent out to new members. Pair new people up with current member of CAC.

Pat recognized Al, Tom, Marina, Meg and Sandy and thanked them for their service on the R3 CAC.

Meeting adjourned.

